

Resilience

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What Is Resilience?

Resilience is the ability to:

- Bounce back
- Take on difficult challenges and still find meaning in life
- Respond positively to difficult situations
- Rise above adversity
- Cope when things look bleak
- Tap into hope
- Transform unfavorable situations into wisdom, insight, and compassion
- Endure

Resilience refers to the ability of an individual, family, organization, or community to cope with adversity and adapt to challenges or change. It is an ongoing process that requires time and effort and engages people in taking a number of steps to enhance their response to adverse circumstances. Resilience implies that after an event, a person or community may not only be able to cope and recover, but also change to reflect different priorities arising from the experience and prepare for the next stressful situation.

- Resilience is the most important defense people have against stress.
- It is important to build and foster resilience to be ready for future challenges.
- Resilience will enable the development of a reservoir of internal resources to draw upon during stressful situations.

Research (Aguirre, 2007; American Psychological Association, 2006; Bonanno, 2004) has shown that resilience is ordinary, not extraordinary, and that people regularly demonstrate being resilient.

- Resilience is not a trait that people either have or do not have.
- Resilience involves behaviors, thoughts, and actions that can be learned and developed in anyone.
- Resilience is tremendously influenced by a person's environment.

Resilience changes over time. It fluctuates depending on how much a person nurtures internal resources or coping strategies. Some people are more resilient in work life, while others exhibit more resilience in their personal relationships. People can build resilience and promote the foundations of resilience in any aspect of life they choose.

What Is Individual or Personal Resilience?

Individual resilience is a person's ability to positively cope after failures, setbacks, and losses. Developing resilience is a personal journey. Individuals do not react the same way to traumatic or stressful life events. An approach to building resilience that works for one person might not work for another. People use varying strategies to build their resilience. Because resilience can be learned, it can be strengthened. Personal resilience is related to many factors including individual health and well-being, individual aspects, life history and experience, and social support.

Individual Health and Well-Being

Individual Aspects	Life History and Experience	Social Support
These are factors with which a person is born. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Personality• Ethnicity• Cultural background• Economic background	These are past events and relationships that influence how people approach current stressors. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Family history• Previous physical health• Previous mental health• Trauma history• Past social experiences• Past cultural experiences	These are support systems provided by family, friends, and members of the community, work, or school environments. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Feeling connected to others• A sense of security• Feeling connected to resources

(Adapted from Simon, Murphy, & Smith, 2008)

Along with the factors listed above, there are several attributes that have been correlated with building and promoting resilience.

The American Psychological Association reports the following attributes regarding resilience:

- The capacity to make and carry out realistic plans
- Communication and problem-solving skills
- A positive or optimistic view of life
- Confidence in personal strengths and abilities
- The capacity to manage strong feelings, emotions, and impulses

What Is Family Resilience?

Family resilience is the coping process in the family as a functional unit. Crisis events and persistent stressors affect the whole family, posing risks not only for individual dysfunction, but also for relational conflict and family breakdown. Family processes mediate the impact of stress for all of its members and relationships, and the protective processes in place foster resilience by buffering stress

and facilitating adaptation to current and future events. Following are the three key factors in family resilience (Wilson & Ferch, 2005):

- Family belief systems foster resilience by making meaning in adversity, creating a sense of coherence, and providing a positive outlook.
- Family organization promotes resilience by facilitating flexibility, capacity to adapt, connectedness and cohesion, emotional and structural bonding, and accessibility to resources.
- Family communication enhances resilience by engaging clear communication, open and emotional expressions, trust and collaborative problem solving, and conflict management.

What Is Organizational Resilience?

Organizational resilience is the ability and capacity of a workplace to withstand potential significant economic times, systemic risk, or systemic disruptions by adapting, recovering, or resisting being affected and resuming core operations or continuing to provide an acceptable level of functioning and structure.

- A resilient workforce and organization is important during major decisions or business changes.
- Companies and organizations, like individuals, need to be able to rebound from potentially disastrous changes.
- The challenge for the incorporation of resilience into a workplace is to identify what enhances the ability of an organization to rebound effectively.

Measuring workplace resilience involves identifying and evaluating the following:

- Past and present mitigative mechanisms and practices that increase safety
- Past and present mitigative mechanisms and practices that decrease error
- Necessary redundancy in systems
- Planning and programming that demonstrate collective mindfulness
- Anticipation of potential trouble and solutions to potential problems

(Adapted from Wilson & Ferch, 2005)

What Is Community Resilience?

Community resilience is the individual and collective capacity to respond to adversity and change. It is a community that takes intentional action to enhance the personal and collective capacity of its citizens and institutions to respond to and influence the course of social and economic change. For a community to be resilient, its members must put into practice early and effective actions so that they can respond to change. When responding to stressful events, a resilient community will be able to strengthen community bonds, resources, and the capacity to cope. Systems involved with building and maintaining community resilience must work together.

How Does Culture Influence Resilience?

Cultural resilience refers to a culture's capacity to maintain and develop cultural identity and critical cultural knowledge and practices. Along with an entire culture fostering resilience, the interaction of culture and resilience for an individual also is important. An individual's culture will have an impact on how the person communicates feelings and copes with adversity. Cultural parameters are often embedded deep in an individual. A person's cultural background may influence one deeply in how one responds to different stressors. Assimilation could be a factor in cultural resilience, as it could be a positive way for a person to manage his/her environment. However, assimilation could create conflict between generations, so it could be seen as positive or negative depending on the individual and culture. Because of this, coping strategies are going to be different. With growing cultural diversity, the public has greater access to a number of different approaches to building resilience. It is something that can be built using approaches that make sense within each culture and tailored to each individual.

What Factors Promote Resilience?

Resilience involves the modification of a person's response to a potentially risky situation. People who are resilient are able to maintain high self-esteem and self-efficacy in spite of the challenges they face. By fostering resilience, people are building psychological defenses against stress. The more resources and defenses available during a time of struggle, the better able to cope and bounce back from adverse circumstances people will be. A person's ability to regain a sense of normalcy or define a new normalcy after adverse circumstances will be partially based on the resources available to him/her. Resilience building can begin at any time. Following is information regarding applicable ways to implement resilience practices, as well as situations that could inhibit resilience, situations that enhance resilience, and people who help facilitate the growth of resilience.

Resilience

	Demonstrating Resilience	Vulnerability Factors Inhibiting Resilience	Protective Factors Enhancing Resilience	Facilitators of Resilience
<i>Individual Resilience</i> The ability for an individual to cope with adversity and change	Optimism Flexibility Self-confidence Competence Insightfulness Perseverance Perspective Self-control Sociability	Poor social skills Poor problem solving Lack of empathy Family violence Abuse or neglect Divorce or partner breakup Death or loss Lack of social support	Social competence Problem-solving skills Good coping skills Empathy Secure or stable family Supportive relationships Intellectual abilities Self-efficacy Communication skills	Individuals Parents Grandparents Caregivers Children Adolescents Friends Partners Spouses Teachers Faith Community

	Demonstrating Resilience	Vulnerability Factors Inhibiting Resilience	Protective Factors Enhancing Resilience	Facilitators of Resilience
<p><i>Organizational Resilience</i></p> <p>The ability for a business or industry, including its employees, to cope with adversity and change</p>	<p>Proactive employees</p> <p>Clear mission, goals, and values</p> <p>Encourages opportunities to influence change</p> <p>Clear communication</p> <p>Nonjudgmental</p> <p>Emphasizes learning</p> <p>Rewards high performance</p>	<p>Unclear Expectations</p> <p>Conflicted expectations</p> <p>Threat to job security</p> <p>Lack of personal control</p> <p>Hostile atmosphere</p> <p>Defensive atmosphere</p> <p>Unethical environment</p> <p>Lack of communication</p>	<p>Open communication</p> <p>Supportive colleagues</p> <p>Clear responsibilities</p> <p>Ethical environment</p> <p>Sense of control</p> <p>Job security</p> <p>Supportive management</p> <p>Connectedness among departments</p> <p>Recognition</p>	<p>Employers</p> <p>Managers</p> <p>Directors</p> <p>Employees</p> <p>Employee assistance programs</p> <p>Other businesses</p>
<p><i>Community Resilience</i></p> <p>The ability for an individual and the collective community to respond to adversity and change.</p>	<p>Connectedness</p> <p>Commitment to community</p> <p>Shared values</p> <p>Structure, roles, and responsibilities exist throughout community</p> <p>Supportive</p> <p>Good communication</p> <p>Resource sharing</p> <p>Volunteerism</p> <p>Responsive organizations</p> <p>Strong schools</p>	<p>Lack of support services</p> <p>Social discrimination</p> <p>Cultural discrimination</p> <p>Norms tolerating violence</p> <p>Deviant peer group</p> <p>Low socioeconomic status</p> <p>Crime rate</p> <p>Community disorganization</p> <p>Civil rivalry</p>	<p>Access to support services</p> <p>Community networking</p> <p>Strong cultural identity</p> <p>Strong social support systems</p> <p>Norms against violence</p> <p>Identification as a community</p> <p>Cohesive community leadership</p>	<p>Community leaders</p> <p>Faith-based organizations</p> <p>Volunteers</p> <p>Nonprofit organizations</p> <p>Churches/houses of worship</p> <p>Support services staff</p> <p>Teachers</p> <p>Youth groups</p> <p>Boy/Girl Scouts</p> <p>Planned social networking events</p>

(Adapted from Kelly, 2007)

How Is Personal Resilience Built?

Developing resilience is a personal journey. People do not react the same way to traumatic events. Some ways to build resilience include the following actions:

- Making connections with others
- Looking for opportunities for self-discovery
- Nurturing a positive view of self
- Accepting that change is a part of living
- Taking decisive actions
- Learning from the past

The ability to be flexible is a great skill to obtain and facilitates resilience growth. Getting help when it is needed is crucial to building resilience. It is important to try to obtain information on resilience from books or other publications, self-help or support groups, and online resources like the ones found in this resource collection.

What Can Be Done to Promote Family Resilience?

Developing family resilience, like individual resilience, is different for every family. The important idea to keep in mind is that an underlying stronghold of family resilience is cohesion, a sense of belonging, and communication. It is important for a family to feel that when their world is unstable they have each other. This sense of bonding and trust is what fuels a family's ability to be resilient. Families that learn how to cope with challenges and meet individual needs are more resilient to stress and crisis. Healthy families solve problems with cooperation, creative brainstorming, openness to others, and emphasis on the role of social support and connectedness (versus isolation) in family resiliency. Resilience is exercised when family members demonstrate behaviors such as confidence, hard work, cooperation, and forgiveness. These are factors that help families withstand stressors throughout the family life cycle.

How Is Community Resilience Fostered?

Fostering community resilience will greatly depend on the community itself and involves the community working as a whole toward preparedness. It is the capacity for the collective to take preemptive action toward preparedness. Community resilience involves the following factors:

- Connection and caring
- Collective resources
- Critical analysis of the community
- Skill building for community members
- Prevention, preparedness, and response to stressful events

Resilience is exercised when community members demonstrate behaviors such as confidence, hard work, cooperation, and resourcefulness, and support of those who have needs during particular events. These are factors that help communities withstand challenging circumstances. There are other tips about how to foster community resilience in this resource collection.

Developing resilience is a personal journey. All people do not react in the same way to traumatic and stressful life events. An approach to building resilience that works for one person might not work for another. People use varying strategies. Resilience involves maintaining flexibility and balance in life

during stressful circumstances and traumatic events. Being resilient does not mean that a person does not experience difficulty or distress. Emotional pain and sadness are common in people who have suffered major adversity or trauma in their lives. Stress can be dealt with proactively by building resilience to prepare for stressful circumstances, while learning how to recognize symptoms of stress. Fostering resilience or the ability to bounce back from a stressful situation is a proactive mechanism to managing stress.

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Web Site: <http://www.samhsa.gov/dtac>